

The Coolness of Peter.

By EDGAR WELTON COOLEY.

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"B-R-R-ING!" sounded a bell shrilly in the stillness.

Peter Quiggles opened his eyes with a start, then sat bolt upright and stared. Not four feet from him stood a man with a mask over his eyes. He was holding a dark lantern, flashing the light glaringly in Peter's face.

"How dare you," began the man with the mask, offended—"how dare you set an alarm clock to go off at the very moment I'm ransacking the house? D'ye want to scare me to death? How do you know but I might be subject to heart failure or something and that the sudden fright?"

"I—I'm sorry," began Peter humbly. "I didn't mean to disturb you. I—I can't sleep comfortably on one side all the time, you know, and I have to set the alarm to awaken me so I can turn over."

"Oh," said the man apprehendingly. "Well, don't let it occur again."

"I'll try not to," replied Peter obligingly. "But, you know," he hesitated, "you can't always tell about that clock. You can't always anticipate its behavior. It is a very absentminded clock and possesses some very peculiar notions of its own. Really it is the most aggravating clock you ever saw. Why, once I set the alarm for 4 o'clock in the morning. I wished to go to the station to meet my uncle, you know. He was a very rich bachelor, with no immediate family. Besides, he was in exceedingly poor health. And, would you believe it, that miserable clock betrayed the confidence imposed in it?"

"And your uncle?" asked the man interestedly.

"My uncle was compelled to hunt me up and ring us out of bed. It was very embarrassing. Of course we had to make some kind of an explanation. But unfortunately, you know, my wife and I had no opportunity to consult together. We told entirely different stories. That made my uncle suspicious."

"Naturally," said the man.

"Then, to make matters worse," resumed Peter, with a sigh, "my uncle was a chronic story teller, one of those people who take a frenzied delight in relating a long narrative with a joke at the end of it—the kind of a joke, you know, that you don't really laugh at until the next day."

"I understand," said the man, taking a seat on the edge of the bed resignedly. "I've heard them kind of jokes myself. I call 'em vaccination jokes. They have a point to 'em all right, but they don't take until later. Besides, they are pretty near as bad as having the smallpox."

The man chuckled softly. "Well," Peter continued, "at breakfast this morning this uncle of mine told one of his stories. It was during the days when nearly everybody had one of those silly little things they called chestnut bells. You remember?"

"Perfectly," said the man.

"Well, at the very moment my uncle sprang his joke and leaned back to enjoy our mirth that clock—that unregenerate, malicious clock—Peter laughed long and loudly."

"Don't!" cried the man in a hoarse whisper, glancing affrightedly about. "You'll arouse the household."

"There isn't anybody else in this part of the house," reassured Peter, "but my wife, asleep in the next room, and she's deaf, you know. Really she is so deaf that I can wear a red necktie, green checkered trousers and a purple vest and come home any hour of the night without awakening her."

"You're lucky," said the man, "and being lucky!"

"Lucky!" repeated Peter. "I'm so lucky!"

"Never mind about that," interrupted the man. "I was just going to remark that I never saw a lucky man who didn't have money."

"Money?" replied Peter. "Of course I have money. Really, I've got so much money that I can't fall down without breaking a bill, you know. Once I—"

"Just hand it over, then," interposed the man with the mask commandingly.

"Do I understand that you wish me to hand my money over to you?" queried Peter cautiously.

"That's what I remarked," replied the man, "and you'd better be quick about it if you don't want—"

"My dear sir," said Peter impressively, "as one who has speculated more or less successfully, I beg to give you a little timely advice."

"See here," said the man irritably, "I ain't going to waste any more time with you. I've wasted too much already."

"Why, so you have," remarked Peter thoughtfully, "but you see it isn't exactly my fault! I didn't invite you here, and, really, I'm not insisting upon your staying, you know. Maybe you're waiting for me to order you out?"

"Well, you are cool," said the man admiringly.

"Of course I'm cool," replied Peter. "It's very convenient to be cool sometimes—on a cold winter's night, for instance. You see, your wife won't put her feet against you if you are cool."

The man with the mask laughed softly, then arose to his feet. "Look here," he said, "are you going to give me that money or ain't you? I've got a gun in my hand, it's pointing at you, it's loaded, and my finger is on the trigger."

"It certainly is very kind of you to warn me of my danger," replied Peter

gratefully. "The light of your lantern blinds me so that I had not noticed you had a gun. But, really, won't you please point it in some other direction? It makes me nervous, you know, and when I get nervous my memory fails me quite suddenly. I might forget where I put my money. I always experience considerable trouble in remembering what I do with all my money anyhow."

"Come, come," said the man. "Hand it over. Fork it out. I can't stay here all night. I want to be going."

"Since you speak of it," replied Peter wearily, "I really wish you would go. I would enjoy going back to sleep, you know. I'm tired. You see, I was out to the lodge last night. Do you belong to any lodge? No? Well, the union, then—you belong to the union, of course?"

"I see very plainly," said the man resolutely, "that you do not intend to give me that money peacefully. Guess I'd better—"

"Why, my dear sir," responded Peter naively, "I haven't refused, have I? Really I beg your pardon if I have appeared backward in complying with your most natural and reasonable request. I am not unmindful, you know, that you are at this moment a guest in my house, and I certainly meant no disrespect. How much money do you want?"

"All you have," replied the man gruffly.

"But, my dear sir," protested Peter humbly, "if you could just manage to get along with a trifle less—just a trifle, you know—perhaps some time in the future I can repay your kindness and consideration. You see, tomorrow morning before breakfast is the day and the hour when our cook expects her week's wages. Possibly you lack the experience that would enable you to thoroughly understand the situation, but really, you know, I cannot imagine any position more embarrassing in which a man could be placed than to be forced to face his cook on such a momentous occasion without a cent in his pocket, and my cook unfortunately is a very robust cook. Really I shudder to even think of such a predicament."

"To thunder with the cook!" replied the man shortly. "I want to know if you're going to—"

"And, then, there are the gas man and the iceman," resumed Peter. "Of course I realize that you have nearly as much claim upon my money as they have—really it is rather difficult to discriminate between you—but it wouldn't be just right, you know, to give you all the money and not save a cent for the other holdup men, now, would it? Of course I understand that between you all you will get all my money anyhow, and I'm really not much concerned who gets it, most, only I don't want to appear partial, you know."

"You can do just as you please," replied the man determinedly. "You have your choice between giving me all your money and taking the consequences. I'm not here for my health, I tell you."

"Oh, well, if you feel that way about it," said Peter resignedly, "you'll find my trousers on a chair at the foot of the bed. My purse is in the right hip pocket."

The man with the mask walked to the chair, slipped his hand in the pocket indicated and pulled out a black wallet. Emptying the contents upon the bed, he counted them deliberately.

"See here," he said indignantly, "there is only \$10.24 here!"

"What!" gasped Peter breathlessly, leaping out upon the floor. "How—much—did you say?"

"Ten dollars and twenty-four cents," replied the man.

"Are you sure?" demanded Peter in an agony of despair. "Are you certain you haven't made a mistake?"

"No," said the man. "That's all there is."

"Oh, dear, dear!" wailed Peter. "I see it all. I didn't want to believe it, but I guess it must be true. It really is too bad. I don't see why she did it. She might have known—"

"She?" said the man. "Who?"

"My wife," replied Peter tearfully. "I am exceedingly sorry, but she beat you to it, you know."

"Well," said the man, rather disappointedly, "I reckon this will have to do then. But next time—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Peter, who had followed him to the door, "but really I am afraid you will fall down the stairs. It is so dark behind that lantern. Wait. I will turn on the light. There; now you can watch me and see where you are going at the same time."

"Thank you," said the man, backing slowly down the stairs, his revolver still in his hand. "As I was going to remark, I never met anybody who was quite—"

"No; that isn't right," said Peter. "You have to turn that small knob first. There; that unlocks the door. But you were saying—"

"I was going to say," again began the man, looking up at Peter, but placing one hand behind him and pulling open the door, "that I never—"

But two policemen suddenly sprang through the door and pinioned the man's arms behind his back.

"Really, I am sorry," grinned Peter, "but I guess you will have to finish your sentence in jail, won't you? You see, that bell was a burglar alarm. You rang it when you entered my room, and unfortunately, you know, it is connected with an automatic device at the police station. They were rather long coming, but I trust you found my companionship agreeable. I certainly did my best to entertain you."

"Say," said the man, submitting quietly to the officers, "you lied to me about the iceman, didn't you? Your wife don't need no ice when she's got a cold storage plant for a husband. You're the coolest!"

But the patrol wagon was rolling away.

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Edited By County Supt Joel H. Pile, Hardinsburg, Ky.

THOSE CRITICISMS KINDLY SPOKEN.

Supt. Pile Makes Earnest Appeal For Cleanliness in the School-room In Answer To Requests.

TEACHERS ARE CRITICISED.

I approach a painful subject,—one in which I may be misunderstood, and charged with "carping and caviling at faults of manner;" but such is not the case.

Within the last few years there have, from time to time, been brought to my notice a number of instances of serious oversights and inexcusable carelessnesses of teachers. Many of these have been spoken, others written, and all were with the injunction that "you call the attention of our teacher to the matter so that it may cease to exist."

Now this is a most difficult thing to do.

Little criticisms of your friends, however kindly meant, are often the tests that show the strength of friendship, sometimes even severing it.

The teacher who is unwilling or unable to lay aside some hurtful habit or overcome some little eccentricity is poorly equipped for teaching others. He who will not learn, who refuses to perfect his own manners and conduct is out of his sphere when placed over children for the purpose of teaching them.

Remember that example is one of the most powerful teachers.

But to the things complained of:

Chews and Spits.

Complains one, "Our teacher not only chews tobacco, but spits upon the floor of the school-room." To this I have two things to say: Brother teacher quit it, and Mr. Trustee, don't hire a man until you know he doesn't set this fearful example for the children who go to school to learn of him.

Whiskey on His Breath.

Listen to this: "Our teacher is spending too much money for booze, and often goes to school with whiskey fumes upon his breath." Rather than anything else I'd rather reform such a man and make him right for the school room; next to the pleasure of reforming such is the duty of revoking a certificate held by one of this sort. In these cases come with the proof, and the effective thing will be done at this office.

Needs a Punch.

"Our teacher pleases the pupils but he never does any studying himself, nor does he inspire the pupils to do a thing outside the school room." Wake him up and put him to work, or pass him on to another district next year with the fact well published that he's not the right sort to do any especial good.

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Needs a Bath.

"Our teacher doesn't shave, care for his teeth or keep his face clean." This is a written complaint on file in my office, and would be shown were it not for the fact it would divulge the writer and the careless teacher complained of. No one need call for the letter or inquire about it, for it will not be shown. The thing is for unshaven, unbrushed, unwashed, untidy individual to take the hint, clean up, and henceforth go before pupils in a dignified way, characteristic of the neat modern-day gentleman whose personal appearance is in keeping with the exalted work.

Dirty Collars and Nails.

"Our teacher does not wear clean linen and gives no attention to his nails," says one. I recommend that the patrons and pupils who have made this observation, each present the school with the motto, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," and Addison's "Cleanliness may be defined to be the emblem of purity of mind." The real teacher cannot overlook these things without calling upon himself a just criticism, a criticism which will detract from his power and influence, and the people are wise in complaining.

Appeal to Out-siders.

Can you, Mr. Patron or Mr. Trustee, go to your teacher and with christian kindness tactfully tell him that he must conform to the standard of these days when the teacher must live what he would have the child become?

Lacks Table Manners.

The table manners of one excellent teacher have been observed to the embarrassment of every open-eyed friend.

These are some of the things that creep in to mar the good work of some otherwise successful teachers. There are others. In fact, who of us is perfect? Again, who of us is satisfied with what he is just now? So long as perfection is not, and dissatisfaction with self is, there is hope.

Will Be Repaid.

If these words will help us to use the truth, the whisk broom, the laundry mow; if they will set any of us more earnestly to work; if they will move some moral standard a notch higher; if they will cause slang to be supplanted by good English; if they will make a single teacher have a higher conception of what it means to teach—in fact, if they are productive of any good I shall be glad I bore the pain of writing them. They are applicable to some larger students.

THE CIGARETTE SMOKING BOY.

(Continued from last week.)

The ordinary cigarette-smoking student often has a very peculiar experience in his effort to prepare his daily lessons, about as follows: He goes to his room in the evening with the full intention of studying and opens his text book, but a certain feeling of nervous uneasiness soon leads his hands automatically to roll and light a cigarette. He indulges the habit a few minutes when, presto, the lesson task which awhile ago looked serious and urgent now appears trivial and unnecessary, and he accordingly neglects it. He is now affable and companionable, but the higher moral judgements have lost their value to him and he is most ready to yield to the evil suggestions of others. The partial brain paralysis resulting from the smoking makes the victim regard with indifference the most sacred promise he has ever made to anyone, and he is likely to violate it upon the slightest provocation.

FEW ARE ABLE TO QUIT THE HABIT.

The more I work with these confirmed cases of cigarette smokers, the more I am convinced of the futility of attempting a complete, permanent

Continued on Page 8.



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